

MEMORANDUM DM 01-07

DATE: December 17, 2001

TO: All Coal Mine Operators

FROM: _____
Frank A. Linkous
Chief, Division of Mines

SUBJECT: Surface Mining Within 200 Feet of A Gas Well or Pipeline

Surface mining activity often takes place in close proximity to gas wells and pipelines. Mine operators are requesting, with increasing frequency, approval to mine within 200 feet of these structures. Section 45.1-161.292 of the Coal Mine Safety Laws of Virginia provides for this mining activity with the prior approval of the Chief. Virginia Administrative Code 4 VAC 25-101-150 establishes notification requirements for mine operators planning to remove coal or extend workings in any mine closer than 500 feet to any gas well already drilled or in the process of being drilled. Section 4 VAC 25-101-160 requires mine operators planning to remove coal or extend mine workings closer than 200 feet to any permitted or pending gas well, vertical ventilation hole or pipeline to submit a plan to the Chief for approval to conduct mining operations. The plan must comply with requirements developed by the Chief.

To assist mine operators in developing plans to be submitted to the Chief for approval, the following minimum requirements should be addressed in the plan:

- The procedures established with gas well operators for coordination of safe mining operations around gas wells and pipelines;
- The closest distance mining activities will be performed to gas wells and pipelines;
- The procedures to be employed to protect gas wells and pipelines from the affects of surface mining (blasting, equipment movement, etc.); and
- The procedures established to inform all affected miners concerning the locations of gas wells and pipelines, and the safety standards to be followed when mining within 200 feet of these structures.

Should you have any questions or need assistance with preparation of a plan, please contact the Division of Mines Operator Assistance at (276) 523-8231.

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